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## VII.—LEARNÈD AND LEARN'D.

This paper is a part of a larger study on the general subject, 'The Loss or Retention of Weak Syllables in English,' which I shall publish at a later time.

It is well known that there are words like *aged*, *blessed*, *learned*, in which the *e* is silent if the word is a participle, but is sounded if the word is an adjective. I am not aware that an explanation of this interesting phenomenon has been offered, other than the usual untenable one that it is "in order to distinguish" the parts of speech. It is my object in this paper to show (1) that this, as well as certain closely related phenomena, is based on the fact that our speech prefers a rhythm consisting of syllables alternately strong and weak, and (2) that this has produced different results in the adjective from what it has in the participle because the usual position of the adjective with reference to the other members of the sentence is not that generally occupied by the participle.

From the start we must exclude from consideration all those cases in which the ending *-ed* is preceded by a *d* or *t*; for here the *e* was retained (or restored) because essential to the preservation of the consonantal frame of the word: *fadèd*, *gildèd*, *intendèd*, *weddèd*, *giftèd*, *spirited*, *notèd*, etc.

Where the *e* of *-ed* adjoined a vowel (whether stressed or unstressed) or a diphthong, it early blended with it: *annoyèd*, *dignifièd*, etc. These words, too, are therefore excluded from further consideration, and the field is clear for the observation of the action of rhythmic forces.

An alternate rhythm implies:—

(1) The retention of a weak syllable between two heavily stressed ones.

(2) A tendency to lose one of two adjoining weak syllables. These tendencies were formulated by ten Brink as follows:—

(1) "Schwaches *e* zwischen dem Hauptton und dem Ne-

benton hat in englischen Wörtern (wo es häufig auf Analogie beruht) sowie in englischen Ableitungen aus bezw. Zusammensetzungen mit fremden Elementen gewöhnlich Silbenwerth" (*Chaucers Sprache und Verskunst*, § 262).

(2) "I. Enthalten zwei aufeinander folgende Silben je ein schwaches *e*, so verliert ein von diesen nothwendig seinen Silbenwerth. . . . II. Nach unbetonter, jedoch tonfähiger Silbe muss ein schwaches *e* verstummen" (*Id.*, §§ 256, 257).

Ten Brink himself had occasion to apply principle (2) in treating of Chaucer's participles in *-ed*: "Einem allgemeinen Gesetz gemäss (§ 257) wird das *e* der Endung *-ed*, wenn die zweitvorhergehende Silbe den Ton trägt, stumm, ohne dass die Syncope gewöhnlich graphisch ausgedrückt würde: *pínissshed*, *vánissshed*, *enlúmined*, *empoisoned* u. s. w." (*Id.*, § 181).

To these should be added those words whose simple form ends in a consonant + a sonorous consonant (or a semi-vowel) + *e*, for example, *-tle*, *-kne*, *-lwe*, *-rje*, etc. In Chaucer's time the sonorous consonant or semi-vowel was not syllabic (*Id.*, § 261); thus, *whistlə whistléd*, *herknə herknəd*, *halwə halwəd*, *harjə harjəd*, etc. When, shortly after Chaucer's time, the final *-e* became silent, the sonorous consonant—when not followed by a word beginning with a vowel—became syllabic, that is, *whistlə* > *whistl̩*, *herknə* > *herkn̩*, etc. Naturally the inflected forms also assumed the syllabic *l*, *n*, etc.; but this forced the loss of the *ə* of *-ed*; thus, *whistléd* > *whistl̩(ə)d*, *herknəd* > *herkn̩(ə)d*, *halwəd* > *halu(ə)d* (> *hælod*), *harjəd* > *harj̩(ə)d*,—just as Chaucer's *ladɹəs*, *bodɹəs* > *ladɹ̩(ə)s*, *bodɹ̩(ə)s*, by analogy to *lady*, *body*, etc.

There remain for consideration those verbs in which the stress falls on the syllable before the *-ed*, and in which the *-ed* is separated from this stressed syllable by a consonant or a consonant combination other than non-sonorous consonant + sonorous consonant. It is my object to show that in these the very same principles apply, except that it is now the weak syllable of a *following word*—not a preceding syllable in the word itself—that causes the loss of the *e* of *-ed*. It will be

observed that, if the *e* be retained, the words we have to consider are<sup>1</sup> of this type  $\text{—}ad$ , in which  $\text{—}$  represents a heavily stressed syllable and  $ad$  represents the weakly stressed ending. When a word of this type is followed by a weak word or a weak initial syllable of the succeeding word, we again get  $\text{—} \sim \text{—}$ , and the alternate rhythm favors the loss of the *e* of *-ed* (cf. (2) page 318). On the other hand, when a word of this type is followed by a heavily stressed syllable, we get  $\text{—} \sim \text{—}$ , and the alternate rhythm as imperatively requires the retention of the *e* (cf. (1) page 318). It is, in fact, more difficult to stress heavily two succeeding syllables than to allow two weak syllables to intervene between two heavy ones; where there is no such intervening weak syllable, we usually make a slight pause in which to recuperate (cf. my *German Orthography and Phonology*, § 274, 2 end), or admit *a*, cf. dialectic *Lóok ä hère, thát ä wáy*. Let the rhythmical force (or the physiological convenience of utterance) have full sway, and such an *-ed* word will appear in the two forms *-ed* and *-d*, the first before a heavy stress, the second before a weak syllable. We pronounce the word in both ways and, hence, retain, unconsciously of course, a muscular memory of both; we also hear both forms and, hence, retain an auditory memory of both. If the two forms are practically equally distinct and occur with about the same frequency, they will probably continue side by side, and our phonetic, or rhythmical, or physiological law (however we may choose to designate it) is supreme. But if, with practical equality in distinctness, one of the two forms occurs much more frequently than the other, that is, if we ourselves utter it much more often and hear it from others much more often, then the impression it makes upon the mind is stronger and fresher, and it is far more likely to suggest itself in response to the idea than is the other form, and that, too, even when the physical conditions would have favored

<sup>1</sup> That is, if no syllable precedes the stressed syllable; the few words having such a preceding syllable *end* in this type.

the rarer form. That is, the results of the phonetic law are more or less effaced by the psychological.

But this need not be the same over the whole ground. If on the one hand the word has one function and on the other another, and if one form is the more common in the first function and the other in the second, the one form is apt to prevail in the one case and the other in the other.

Now, with reference to the words under consideration, I took as a basis for my study a prose text that fairly represents the language as it was shortly before the *e* of *-ed* began to become generally silent—*The Persones Tale* of Chaucer. I divided the words into three classes:—

(1) Adjectives used attributively and predicatively.

(2) Participles.

(3) Adjectives used almost only predicatively, such as *ashamed*, *enclyned*, etc. They are arranged below according as the rhythm would require the type  $\neg d$  or the type  $\neg d$ , or as it is neutral, namely, when the word occurs just before a pause. First the actual number of cases found is given, and then the percents.

	$\neg d$	$\neg d$	neutral	total
Adj's, attrib. and pred.....	12	49	7	68
Participles.....	95	10	28	133
Adj's, only predicate.....	6	0	4	10
Adj's, attrib. and pred.....	18%	72%	10%	
Participles.....	71%	8%	21%	
Adj's, only predicate.....	60%	0%	40%	

That is, in the adjectives used both attributively and predicatively the rhythm favored the retention of the *e* in 72 per cent. of the cases, and favored its suppression in but 18 per cent.; but in the participles it favored the suppression of the *e* in 71 per cent. of the cases, and favored its retention in but 8 per cent., while in the adjectives used almost only predicatively it favored the suppression of the *e* in 60 per cent. of the cases and in no case favored its retention. In other words, the rhythm favored the retention of the *e* in the

ordinary adjectives just about as strongly as it favored its suppression in the participles and the predicate adjectives. Hence, what happened is just what we should expect to happen: the *-ed* became general in the ordinary adjectives, and the *-d* became general in the participles and the predicate adjectives.

It may be asked, just how does it happen that the ordinary adjective usually stands before a heavy syllable, and the participle and the predicate adjective before a weak syllable? This is due to the fact that most adjectives that are used both attributively and predicatively are far more often used attributively than predicatively, and to the fact that an attributive adjective usually stands before a heavy syllable because most of our substantives begin with a heavy syllable: *thē wrétchēd mán*. The same thing is true when there is a series of adjectives, for most adjectives also begin with a heavily stressed syllable: *thē wrétchēd sínful mán*. On the other hand, participles, like verbs, are usually followed by some modifier, and this, in the vast majority of cases, is an adverbial group beginning with a preposition or a conjunction, or it is a weak pronoun. Of the 95 cases that we found above to favor the loss of *e* in the participle, 90 come under the following heads:—

53 prepositions,

18 conjunctions,

10 pronouns and articles,

9 weak adverbs and adjectives—and dissyllabic adverbs beginning with a weak syllable.

As to the final position it will be observed that the figures are as might be expected: it is the predicate adjective that occurs there most frequently, 40 per cent.; while the participles are found in this position less often, 21 per cent., being more apt to be followed by adverbial modifiers; and the common adjectives, being attributive much more frequently than predicate, occur just before a pause least often, 10 per cent.

The most common adjectives of this kind that are used both attributively and predicatively are, perhaps, included in the following list:—

<i>*naked</i>	<i>*blessed</i>	<i>striped</i>
<i>*wicked</i>	<i>*(a)cursed</i>	<i>jagged</i>
<i>*wretched</i>	<i>deuced</i>	<i>ragged</i>
<i>aged</i>	<i>*crooked</i>	<i>crabbed</i>
<i>learned</i>	<i>peaked</i>	<i>dogged</i>
<i>beloved</i>	<i>streaked</i>	<i>rugged.</i>

Of these Chaucer had occasion to use in *The Persones Tale* those marked with an \*, as also *dampned* ‘damned,’ in which the short form has prevailed because of its frequent occurrence between stressed *Gód* and a following stressed noun like *fóol*, cf. page 324. *deuced* is usually an adverb before an adjective: *deúced prétty*. *aged*, *learned*, *(a)cursed*, *peaked*, *streaked*, *striped*, *crooked*, *dogged*, *beloved* and *blessed* are also used as participles and then have *-d*; *beloved* and *blessed* hardly occur as predicate adjectives.

Many adjectives in which we might expect *-ed*, have *-d*, because in them the participial idea is still more or less alive, and because they but recently were, or still are, more frequently used in the predicate; so *inclined*, *ashamed*, *appalled*, etc. Some are now quite often used attributively, but retain the form they acquired when more often used predicatively: *arched*, *forced*, *stuffed*, *chapped*, *chopped*, *diseased*, *reserved*, *fixed*, *vexed*, *ribbed*, *webbed*, etc. In some cases we can still see how the attributive use was of later growth, as in the case of *barbed* in consequence of the general introduction of barbed wire. Compare also the comparatively recent frequent use of *unabridged* attributively in connection with certain dictionaries.

The list might be much increased by the addition of such words as *stubbled*, *chubbed*, *scabbed*, *cragged*, etc., for many of which forms in *-y* are more common. So *crazed* is hardly an adjective, *crazy* being always used attributively at least.

Sometimes the dissyllabic pronunciation has prevailed in but one meaning or use of the adjective: *a pickèd leaf*, but *picked men*, often *hookèd nose*, *forkèd beard*, *forkèd lightning*, but *hooked line*, *forked stick*, etc. As to some of these usage is not settled.

Very many adjectives drop the *e* because, when used attributively, it is always or most frequently after an emphatic modifier, where their stressed syllable gets weaker stress. This corresponds to ten Brink's rule II, § 257 (page 319 above). Thus *fár-fètchəd árgument*, *lóng-límbed féllow*, *lárge-sòuled mán*, *bíg-mùthəd bóy*, *góod-sizəd chícken*, *shórt-lívəd fáith*, *bób-tàiled hórse*, *únskilled lábor*, *stíff-nèckəd príde*, *húnych-báckəd wóman*, *cróss-gráined blóck*, *hárd-shèlled Báptist*, *sháme-fàcəd mánner*, *háre-bráined ídiot*, *hén-pèckəd húsband*, *Gód-dámmed fóol*, *hálf-stárved children*, *fóur-lèaved clóver*, *twó-edged swórd*, etc. This is made especially clear by the fact that the *e* is sometimes dropped in such cases, but not when the word is used independantly: *óld-àged mán*, *lóng-wingəd bírds*, but *an àged mán*, *a wíngəd Níke*, etc. As to some usage varies, thus *bow-leggəd* or *bow-legg'd*, etc. Children often say *learn'd* for *learnèd* because they have long known the participle when they first meet the adjective, a good illustration of the way analogy often works in such cases. Not infrequently more than one force tends in the same direction, thus *famed* occurs most frequently after strong *far*: *á fár-fàmed hérò*, or before weak *for*: *fàmed fòr déeds òf válòr*, and *armed* usually occurs after strong *well*: *á wèll-àrmed fléet*, or before a weak preposition: *àrmed wíth gúns*, etc.

The ending *-ly* was formerly a heavy syllable, the *y* being long. This, therefore, required before it a weak syllable and thus the *e* was retained in such adverbs as *àdvísèdlý*, *àssúrèdlý*, *còmposèdlý*, *cònfèssèdlý*, *fixèdlý*, *rèsèrvèdlý*; not, however, in *ill-fávòrèdlý*, *gòod-nátüèdlý*, etc., because these have one weak syllable before the *-ly* anyway. The same is true of derivatives in *-ness*, formerly a heavy ending: *còmposèdnèss*, *rèsèrvèdnèss*, *fixèdnèss*, *àmázèdnèss*, *pléasèdnèss*; but such derivatives



are now less often used, our feeling for them is largely lost, and when we meet with them in reading or are otherwise forced to use them, we often allow the analogy of the participle to prevail and omit the *e*, which we can easily do on account of the present weakness of the ending. In poetry the fuller forms are still very common.

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